

February 3, 2023

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Alex Morey
Director, Campus Rights Advocacy
Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression
510 Walnut St., Ste 1250
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Dear Alex Morey:

This letter is to inform you that the Higher Learning Commission (HLC or “the Commission”) has reviewed your complaint dated January 4, 2023, regarding Hamline University. As stated in HLC Policy COMM.A.10.030, Complaints and Other Information Regarding Member Institutions, HLC’s complaints process is designed to enable the Commission to review, in a timely and fair manner, information that suggests potential substantive non-compliance with an institution’s ability to meet the Criteria for Accreditation or other HLC requirements.

Upon initial review of your complaint, HLC determined that it cannot proceed with a review of your complaint under its policies and processes. As detailed further on the HLC website, under HLC procedure, the Commission is typically precluded from reviewing complaints submitted by third parties to the underlying circumstances; “HLC does not...[a]ccept complaints from third parties (the person submitting the complaint must be a party to the complaint).”

As explained in the documentation you provided to HLC with the complaint, the basis of your complaint is that “[the institution] admits that it non-renewed an art history instructor last semester . . .” and that “Hamline has both violated the academic freedom of this instructor by nonrenewing them for their pedagogically relevant teaching. . . .” The supporting documentation also shows that the complaint seeks that “Hamline . . . immediately reinstate the instructor and reaffirm its commitment to academic freedom.”

Notably, the faculty member involved in the circumstances described in your complaint is neither named in the materials nor a party to the complaint. Nonetheless, the complaint pertains to the circumstances of this faculty member and their employment relationship and seeks an individual remedy on their behalf.

Based on HLC’s review, including its review of the aforementioned information, HLC has determined that the complaint constitutes one brought by a third-party to the underlying circumstances. The matter described in the complaint and the information therein is submitted on behalf of an individual that is not a party to the complaint and that, among other things, has not

consented to the release of their information through HLC's complaints process. Therefore, HLC cannot proceed with further review of the complaint under its policies and procedures.

Separate from HLC's complaints process, HLC maintains the Third-Party Comment process, which allows any interested individual, organization, or other entity to submit a comment to HLC regarding an institution at any time and for any reason. All comments received are then provided to the peer review team that conducts the institution's next comprehensive evaluation. Additional information on HLC's Third-Party Comment process, including the submission form, can be found on the HLC website at: <https://www.hlcommission.org/Student-Resources/third-party-comment.html>.

While HLC will not conduct a further review of the institution based on your complaint, please note that HLC is in regular contact with member institutions. As part of this, HLC policy affords the Commission the ability to request information, conduct evaluations, or take other action based on publicly available information. If, at any time, HLC takes formal action following an evaluation or review of information regarding an institution's accreditation status or evaluative schedule, this information will be posted to the HLC website, on the institution's Statement of Accreditation Status (SAS). Hamline University's SAS is available on the HLC website at: <https://www.hlcommission.org/component/directory/?Itemid=&Action=ShowBasic&instid=1390>.

Thank you for your cooperation and for contacting the Higher Learning Commission. If you have additional questions about HLC's complaints process, please contact complaints@hlcommission.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Robert Rucker", with a long, sweeping underline.

Robert Rucker
Manager of Compliance and Complex Evaluations